(b) if so, the names of flights with the type of aircrafts being operated from this Airport;

(c) whether the said Airport has been closed down for air traffic without any convincing reasons; and

(d) if so, the reasons therefor and when the operation is likely to be resumed including the category of aircrafts to be operated?

THE MINISTER OF CIVIL AVIATION (SHRI ANANTH KUMAR): (a) and (b) The airport at Kangra (Gaggal) was taken over by Airports Authority of India in 1991-92. M/s Vayudoot was operating through this airport till Oct., 1993 with Dornier—228 type of aircraft.

(c) and (d) Since no airline has so far shown any interest in operating to this airport, it is not possible to indicate the likely date for resumption of flights.

Subsidy to Haj pilgrims

1719. SHRI VEDPRAKASH P. GOYAL: Will the Minister of CIVIL AVIATION be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the Ministry of Civil Aviation has allocated Rs. 122 crore in the 1998-1999 Budget, as subsidy for Haj pilgrims;

(b) if so, the reasons therefor;

(c) what is the basis thereof and when was the subsidy started;

(d) whether it is also a fact that the Standing Committee on Transport and Tourism had recommended that the subsidy should be phased out;

(e) whether it is also a fact that the amount of subsidy has increased over the years against the recommendations of the Standing Committee; and

(f) in what manner the Ministry propose to do away with the subsidy and in what time span?

THE MINISTER OF CIVIL AVIATION (SHRI ANANTH KUMAR): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) and (c) Haj pilgrim fare since 1994 has remained constant at Rs. 12,000/- per pilgrim. The difference in the cost of operation and Haj pilgrim fare is given as a subsidy by the Government. Subsidy from this Ministry's budget has been provided from Haj 1987 onwards.

(d) and (e) Yes, Sir.

(f) No decision has been taken in the matter so far.

Criteria for Fixing Airfares

1720. SHRI VEDPRAKASH P. GOYAL: Will the Minister of CIVIL AVIATION be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the fare charged by domestic airlines is higher for the same distance in kilometer than their counterparts in foreign countries;

(b) if so, what is the difference, in percentage terms, with major countries and what are the reasons therefor;

(c) whether Government are aware that the domestic air fare is very high in India in the situation of monopolistic competition; and

(d) whether Government have taken any step to make the fare competitive, if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF CIVIL AVIATION (SHRI ANANTH KUMAR): (a) and (b) Fares of Indian Airlines on domestic sectors are low as compared to the fares of airlines in several other countries for similar distances on their domestic routes. Fares of private operators are generally comparable to air fares of Indian Airlines. A statement showing Indian Airlines fares vis-a-vis domestic fares in other countries is given in the Statement. (*See* below).

(c) and (d) The domestic air fares are not regulated. Airlines are free to charge fares keeping in view the commercial angle.